BIOGRAPHY

WILLIAM BEAUMONT'S LETTER TO HIS NEW HAVEN BOOKSELLER, HEZEKIAH HOWE, WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EDITIONS OF BEAUMONT'S BOOK

CHARLOTTE H. PETERS AND JOHN F. FULTON

(Reprinted from Yale J. Biol. & Med., 1933, 6, 9.)

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19th Novem: 1834

Sir

Will you please to let me know, what number of Copies of my "Experiments & Observations &c", you may have remaining on hand. unsold. Soon as convenient? I shall probably have occasion to recall all surplus book from the Eastward, to supply the Western Market, my depot there having become nearly exhausted & the demand for them continuing.

I go to the West again shortly, & will thank you to advise me soon as practicably convenient.

Please address me at Plattsburgh. N.Y. and much oblige

Yrs. Very Respectfully

Wm Beaumont

H. Howe Esqr
New Haven Ct.

Beaumont's letter to Hezekiah Howe

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WILLIAM BEAUMONT'S LETTER TO HIS NEW HAVEN BOOKSELLER, HEZEKIAH HOWE, WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EDITIONS OF BEAUMONT'S BOOK*

CHARLOTTE H. PETERS AND JOHN F. FULTON

The present year marks the centenary of publication of the first great contribution to physiology by an American author. Some indeed have regarded William Beaumont's *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice*, published in Plattsburgh in 1833, as the most important work in the history of American physiology.† It therefore seems fitting at this time to set down any details concerning the book that have not hitherto been made known. The new information which we have to record relates to the method which Beaumont employed for distributing his book after its publication, and also to Beaumont's relations with the well-known contemporary bookseller of New Haven, Hezekiah Howe. Though many early Connecticut physicians seem to have possessed copies of Beaumont's book (see Miller[1]) it is curious, as the following correspondence indicates, that the bookseller had such difficulty in disposing of them.

Our attention was drawn to Beaumont's correspondence with Hezekiah Howe through a manuscript letter of Beaumont, dated 19 November 1834, written as from Plattsburgh, but postmarked on its cover "New York, Nov. 19." It was addressed to "Mr. Hezekiah Howe, Bookseller, New Haven, C^{t}." The letter, which was sold at the C. P. Greenough sale, May 3, 1926, lot 52, at the Anderson Galleries, was recently presented to Mrs. J. F. Fulton by

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* From the Department of Physiology, Yale University School of Medicine.

† On the occasion of the 13th International Physiological Congress at Boston 1929, the first International Congress to be held in America, Beaumont's book was issued in facsimile and presented to all members of the Congress, since it was felt that it exemplified the highest traditions of American physiology. Copies of the facsimile edition can still be obtained at the Harvard University Press.

Mr. Leonard L. Mackall of Savannah, Georgia, and she has kindly allowed us to reproduce it. The text of the letter is as follows:

Sir 19″ Novem: 1834

Will you please to let me know what number of Copies of my "Experiments & Observations etc" you may have remaining on hand, unsold, soon as convenient? I shall probably have occasion to recall all surplus book [sic] from the Eastward to supply the Western Market, my depot there having become nearly exhausted & the demand for them continuing.

I go to the West again shortly, & will thank you to advise me soon as practicably convenient.

Please address me at Plattsburgh, N Y, and much oblige

Yrs. very Respectfully
Wm Beaumont

H. Howe Esqr
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One might infer from this interesting statement that Beaumont's book was less thoroughly appreciated in his native state than in those vigorous Western communities in which Beaumont spent most of his later life. It is clear also that Beaumont personally supervised the distribution of his book from Plattsburgh.

It seemed likely that there must have been some acknowledgment or reply to Beaumont's letter and it was found that the Yale University Library possessed two volumes of manuscript letter-books of Hezekiah Howe and Company, one covering the years from January 1816 to January 1818, and the other, fortunately, the period from March 1833 to May 1838. Upon searching the second letter-book, this reply was found, together with a letter to the agent to whom the unsold copies which Howe had on hand were shipped. They read as follows:

Letter No. 1018 New Haven, 14 April 1835.

Messrs. G. & C. Carvill & Co.

Gentlemen:

By the steamboat this day we have forwarded a box for you containing 60 copies of Beaumont on Digestion sent you by order of the author. We sent four copies to Hartford and Middletown on sale. We will order back such of those which are unsold and send you in a few days. By a gross oversight on our part the box containing the above books was addressed to Robinson Pratt & Co. No. 259 Pearl St. on whom you will have to call for it. We have charged you 25 cents for the box and carting. Y M Ob S

Letter No. 1065 New Haven, 6 May 1835.
Doctor William Beaumont.
Sir:

Having been very busily employed for sometime past we have suffered your business to lie by longer than we had intended. We have disposed of but 7 copies of your works. We sent four to Hartford and four to Middletown, but none have been sold at either place—there are four copies still at the latter place which have not been returned altho' we have sent repeatedly for them, one of us will probably be there 'ere long. I will then obtain and send them to Messrs. Carvill to whom we sent all the others, 60 copies, agreeably to your directions. Annexed you have a statement of the a/c, balance due you $11 which is herewith enclosed, the receipt of which please to acknowledge.

These letters indicate clearly that Hezekiah Howe was responsible for the distribution of Beaumont's book in the State of Connecticut, and from the casual way in which he allowed six months to elapse between the receipt of Beaumont's letter and the reply, one would assume that he had not "pushed" the book very actively! It is probable that Beaumont addressed a second letter to Howe between November 19th and May 6th, but no record of it has been discovered.

Hezekiah Howe (1775-1838) was an erudite publisher and bookseller whose book-shop on Chapel Street (probably just about where the Hotel Taft now stands) came to be a favorite resort of Yale professors in the early years of the last century. Howe, an orphan, had been brought up by his uncle, Isaac Beers, who was New Haven's pioneer bookseller. He was taken into the business by his uncle, and finally, when in 1812 he became senior partner, he started printing and publishing as well as bookselling. He was always in close contact with medical problems, one of his cousins being Dr. Timothy Phelps Beers, and three of his cousins married physicians, Dr. John Titsworth, Dr. Eli Ives and Dr. Charles Hooker, at one time Dean of the Yale Medical School. He was the publisher of Silliman's lectures[2], of later editions of President Jeremiah Day's *Algebra*[3], and printed for S. Converse of New York the first edition of Noah Webster's Dictionary[4].

Hezekiah Howe was the father of the well-known local historian Henry Howe (1816-1893)[5]. In an *Outline History of New Haven*[7] published in 1884, the younger Howe mentions that his father was military commander of New Haven during the War of 1812 and that during this period he was known as "General" Howe. Howe Street in New Haven was named for him.

Beaumont came to New Haven in 1833 to enlist Silliman's help in the analysis of gastric juice, and even earlier than this had been corresponding with Silliman about his experiments (2, p. 165, footnote). It is not surprising therefore that Howe, who was constantly associated with Silliman both in business dealings and public works, was one of the original subscribers to Beaumont's book[1] and the agent for its sale in Connecticut.

Two more short letters from the letter-book tell how the four copies sent to Hartford finally returned to New Haven. However nothing could be learned from that source about the fate of the four copies that went to Middletown, or whether Beaumont ever recovered them.

Letter No. 857
Mr. Luke C. Lyman — New Haven. 12. Dec. 1834.

Dr. Sir We are in immediate want of some Gunter's Scales. If you can furnish them as heretofore, please to send us by an early stage 3 doz. of three different kinds, one dozen of each, if you cant furnish them let us know.

We sent you in May last 4 Beaumont's Experiments, inform us whether any have been sold or not.

Did we find you any of Dwight's Hist. of Hartford Convention? We thought we had, but do not find any charge, let us know whether we did or not. Y M O S

Letter No. 1028
Mr. Luke C. Lyman — New Haven. 21 Apr. 1835.

Dear Sr. Mrs. Howe will probably be at Mr. Starr's in the course of this week, please to leave there for her to bring down the copies of Beaumont on Digestion which we sent you in May last. Y M O[b] S

Discussion

In view of the light that this correspondence throws on the methods employed by Beaumont to distribute his book and the present rarity of first editions of the book, it becomes a matter of interest to know the size of the original issue. In the preface of the second edition published at Burlington, Vermont, by his cousin, Dr. Samuel Beaumont, it is stated that the first edition, "a large one of 3,000 copies," had been exhausted. From what is known of book publishing of the time there is every reason to believe that this was an exaggeration, perhaps designed to emphasize the popularity of the book. In a letter, moreover, by Beaumont himself written to the Surgeon-General on December 3, 1833, he refers to an edition of 1,000. This seems much nearer the truth.

We wish to express our appreciation to Miss Lottie G. Bishop of the School of Medicine and Miss Ethel L. Scofield of the New Haven Colony Historical Society for their assistance and suggestions in collecting the materials about Hezekiah Howe; to Mrs. J. F. Fulton for the use of the original letter, and to the John Crerar Library of Chicago for lending us the German edition of Beaumont's book and from whose copy the present collation was made.

Appendix

As the editions of Beaumont's book are few in number, it has seemed worthwhile to describe them fully. Under "Copies" below, that from which the description is made, is indicated first. In the hope that gaps in our collection of Beaumont editions in the Yale University Library and the Library of the School of Medicine may one day be filled, indication is given of the editions to be found in these collections.

In Samuel Beaumont's preface to the second edition (No. 4) it is stated that the book has been "republished in Great Britain, France and Germany." No trace, however, has been found of a French translation or of an edition published in France.

1. First Edition. Plattsburgh, 1833.

Title: EXPERIMENTS / AND / OBSERVATIONS / ON THE / GASTRIC JUICE, / AND THE / PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION. / [half rule] BY WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M.D. / Surgeon in the U. S. Army. [half rule] PLATTSBURGH, / PRINTED BY F. P. ALLEN. / 1833

8° (see note): A-Z^4 2A-2M^4 280 pp.

Contents: [A] 1*a* (p. 1) title; [A] 1*b* copyright entry; [A] 2*a* (p. 2) Dedication 'To Joseph Lovell, M.D.'; [A] 3*a*-[A] 4*a* (pp. 5-7) 'Preface'; B1*a*-2M3*b* (pp. 9-278) text; 2M4*a* (p. 279) 'Errata'; 2M4*b* (p. 280) 'Contents'.

Back label: "BEAUMONT'S / EXPERIMENTS" on paper slip 2½ x 3½ mm.

Notes: Though published in octavo size (and would be rated as an octavo by the criteria of measurement used in the Library of Congress), the first edition is gathered in fours with continuous signatures and pagination throughout. The chain lines (indistinct) are vertical which suggests that the book was printed on half sheets folded twice, and that it should therefore be regarded technically an octavo in fours. The continuity of the signatures shows that Beaumont must have handed the manuscript complete with 'Dedication,' 'Preface' and 'Introduction' to his printer. The original edition is bound in amber colored paper boards with a brown cloth back. One of the seven copies in the Library of the Provi-

dence Medical Society has a bright Yale blue cloth back, apparently a contemporary binding. The copyright entry on the verso of the title reads: "*Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1833, by William Beaumont, M. D. in the Office of the District Clerk of the United States for the Southern District of New-York.*"

Copies: F (2 copies: [i] with back cut off and pages loose, in case lettered "*Beaumont's Experiments* 1833 WITH HARVARD PRESS DEPREDATIONS 1929, the copy having been used to make the facsimile described below in No. 5; [ii] in original boards and preserved in case lettered Beaumont's Experiments 1833; from Mr. L. L. Mackall) SGO, Osler, YU, John Crerar, Dr. Harvey Cushing, NYA, etc.

2. First Edition, Second Issue. Boston, 1834.

Title: EXPERIMENTS / AND / OBSERVATIONS / ON / THE GASTRIC JUICE, / AND THE / PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION. / [half rule] BY WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M.D./ Surgeon in the U. S. Army. / [half rule] BOSTON: / LILLY, WAIT, AND COMPANY. / 1834. / PRINTED BY F. P. ALLEN.

4°: A-Z^4 2A-2M^4 280 pp.

Contents: [A] 1*a* (p. 1) title; [A]1*b* copyright; [A] 2*a* (p. 2) Dedication 'To Joseph Lovell, M.D.'; [A] 3*a*-[A] 4*a* (pp. 5-7) 'Preface'; Bl*a*-2M3*b* (pp. 9-278) text; 2M4*a* (p. 279) 'Errata'; 2M4*b* (p. 280) 'Contents'.

Notes: This is a reissue of the preceding with a cancel title-page bearing the date 1834. The copyright entry on the verso of the title is in roman type, instead of italics as in the preceding, and 'M. D.' is omitted after Beaumont's name. The issue is much rarer than the original Plattsburgh issue.

Copies: F (From Dr. John E. Donley), YU, Dr. Harvey Cushing, NYA, etc.

3. First Edition, Combe's Reprint. Edinburgh, 1838.

Title: EXPERIMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS / ON THE / GASTRIC JUICE, / AND THE / PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION. / BY / WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M.D. / SURGEON IN THE UNITED STATES' ARMY. / REPRINTED FROM THE PLATTSBURGH EDITION, WITH NOTES BY / ANDREW COMBE, M.D. / FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF EDINBURGH; PHYSICIAN EXTRAORDINARY TO THE QUEEN IN SCOTLAND, AND CONSULTING / PHYSICIAN TO THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS. / [half rule] EDINBURGH: / MACLACHLAN & STEWART, SOUTH BRIDGE; / AND SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO., LONDON. / [half rule] MDCCCXXXVIII.

8°: 10 unsigned leaves; A^4 B^8 C^4 etc., alternating fours and eights to Z^8 Bb^8 Cc^4 Dd^8 xx + 319 pp.

Contents: [A] 1*a* half title; [A] 2*a* title (iii); [A] 2*b* printer's name (iv); [A] 3*a*-[A] 8*a* (v-xv) 'Preface' by the editor; [B] 1*a*-[B] 2*a* (xvii-xix) 'Contents'; A 1*a*-A2*a* (pp. 1-3) 'Preface'; A2*b* blank; A3*a* 'Preliminary Observations'; A4*a*-Bb7*b* (pp. 7-302) text; Bb8*a*-Dd4*a* (pp. 303-319) 'Concluding remarks by the editor.' [Dd 5-8 4 leaves advertising matter].

Notes: This edition with its laudatory preface by Combe introduced Beaumont's observation in Europe. Combe, who was widely known as an authority on digestion, incorporated the results of Beaumont's studies in his well-known book *The Physiology of Digestion* which originally appeared in 1836 (Second edition the same year). Combe's edition of Beaumont is a common book readily obtained from Scottish booksellers. Bibliographically it is odd in being made up of alternate gatherings in fours and in eights. There are no chain lines on the paper but it should be rated as an octavo.

Copies: F, SGO, LC, YU, etc.

4. SECOND EDITION. Burlington, Vt., 1847.

Title: THE / PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION, / WITH / EXPERIMENTS ON THE GASTRIC JUICE. / BY WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M.D. / Surgeon in the U. S. Army. / [half rule] Second Edition: / CORRECTED BY SAMUEL BEAUMONT, M.D. / [half rule] BURLINGTON: / CHAUNCEY GOODRICH. / [half rule] 1847. /

6°: 1-25^{6} 26^{2} 304 pp.

Contents: [p. 1] title; [p. 2] copyright entry; [p. 3] Dedication to Lovell; [p. 4] blank; pp. 5-8 Preface to Second Edition; pp. 9-11 Preface to First Edition; pp. 13-303 text; [p. 304] Index [*i.e.* table of contents].

Binding: Original binding in black cloth lettered "Beaumont's Physiology and Experiments."

Notes: This, the second American Edition, was edited by Beaumont's cousin, Samuel Beaumont. It contains very few textual changes; indeed it is difficult to discover what the 'improvements' mentioned in the Preface to the Second Edition actually were. An account of the circumstances of publication of this edition and of Samuel Beaumont's part in it is to be found in J. S. Myer's *Life and Letters of William Beaumont*, 1912, pp. 287-89.

Copies: F, SGO, LC, YU, YUSch Med, NYA, etc.

5. FIRST EDITION, FACSIMILE. Boston, 1929, 1st issue.

Title: EXPERIMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS / ON THE / GASTRIC JUICE AND THE / PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION / BY / WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M.D. / SURGEON IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY / *FACSIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF 1833 / TOGETHER WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY* / A PIONEER AMERICAN PHYSIOLOGIST / BY / SIR WILLIAM OSLER / *Reprinted*

on the Occasion of the / XIIIth International Physiological Congress /
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS / 1929

8° (22 x 14 cm) No signatures: xl + 1 leaf + 280 pp.
Contents: [p. i] half title 'Observations on Gastric Juice'; [p. ii] blank; Inserted Portrait; [p. iii] title; [p. iv] printer's notice; [p. v] Second half title 'William Beaumont by William Osler, M.D.' [p. vi] blank; pp. vii-xl text of Osler's essay; blank leaf; pp. 1-280 text of facsimile with pagination and full contents of original preserved.
Copies: F, etc.

6. First Edition, Facsimile. Boston (2nd issue with cancel title-page)

Title: The same as No. 5 with "Reprinted on the Occasion of the / XIIIth International Physiological Congress / BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS / 1929" on a cancel title-page, the other having been cut out.

Notes: This issue of 400 was hastily prepared to meet the demand occasioned by the unexpectedly large attendance at the Physiological Congress.
Copies: F, etc.

7. First Edition, Facsimile. Boston, 1929 (2nd issue trade edition)

Title: The same as No. 5 with the omission of the phrase "Reprinted on the Occasion of the XIIIth International Physiological Congress BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1929," and was issued and prepared exactly as No. 5, with the imprint on the title-page "CAMBRIDGE / HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS / 1929 / "

Notes: The Press originally printed 1400 copies of the facsimile, the Congress was supplied with 1,111 copies, leaving 289 copies of the original printing for the trade edition. Of these, 100 copies were in the first binding with the title-page as above bound in. The remaining 189 copies were purchased from the Congress and represented their surplus stock and have a cancel title-page.
Copies: F, etc.

8. First Edition, German. Leipzig, 1834.

Title: Neue Versuche / und / Beobachtungen / über den / Magensaft / und die / Physiologie der Verdauung, / [half rule] Auf eine höchst merkwürdige Weise, während / einer Reihe von sieben Jahren, an einem und / demselben Subjecte angestellt / von / Dr. Wilhelm Beaumont, / Wundarzt in der Armee der vereinigten Staaten Nordamerika's. / [half rule] Aus dem Englischen / übersetzt /von / Dr. Bernhard Luden, / prakt. Arzt in New-York. / [rule] Mit

drei lithographirten Abbildungen. / [rule] Leipzig, 1834, / bei Christian Ernst Kollman. /

8°: 3 unsigned leaves; 1-15[8] vi + 222 pp. 3 plates; 21½ cm.

Contents: [1] 1*a* title; [1] 2*a*-[1] 3*b* (iii-vi) Vorrede. 1 1*a*-1 6*b* (pp. 1-12) Einleitung; 1 7*a*-1 7*b* (pp. 13-14) Vorläufige Bemerkungen; 1 8*a*-15 8*b* (pp. 15-222) text.

Plates: Three lithograph plates on special paper lettered Fig. 1 to 3 inserted between pp. 12 and 13.

Notes: The German edition is evidently rare, only two copies having been found in this country and one abroad. The John Crerar copy bears the following note in Du Bois-Reymond's handwriting:

> "Neueren Versuchen an Alexis Saint-Martin sind angestellt worden von Francis G. Smith Philadelphia Medical Examiner July and September 1856. Journal de Physiologie, etc., publié par E. Brown Séquard, Janvier 1858. p. 144.
>
> "Meisten Nachrichten über St. Martin sind in 'Ausland' 1858 No. 28. S. 671-672 zugenommen aus dem Year book of facts."

Efforts to secure information concerning Dr. Bernhard Luden have been unsuccessful. Nothing could be found at the New York Academy of Medicine, but it is possible that the Joannes Bernardus Luden whose book *De morbis placentae* [Wurzburg] Jena, Bran, 1830, 64 pp., as listed in the Surgeon General's Catalogue is the same individual.

Copies: John Crerar (E. du Bois-Reymond's copy); University Library, Lund, Sweden. German libraries have not been searched.

References

1 Miller, W. S.: William Beaumont and his book. Elisha North and his copy of Beaumont's book. Ann. Med. Hist., 1929, n. s. *1*, 155-79.

2 Silliman, Benjamin: Elements of chemistry in the order of the lectures given in Yale College. New Haven, Hezekiah Howe, 1830. 2 vols. xii + 518 pp.; viii + 696 + 48 + 12 pp.

3 Day, Jeremiah: An introduction to algebra, being the first part of a course of mathematics, adapted to the method of instruction in the American Colleges. 16th ed. New Haven, Hezekiah Howe & Co., 1835, viii + 332 pp., 2 pl.

4 Webster, Noah: American Dictionary. 1st ed. New York, Published by S. Converse. Printed by Hezekiah Howe, New Haven, 1828.

5. Myer, J. S.: Life and letters of Dr. William Beaumont including hitherto unpublished data concerning the case of Alexis St. Martin. St. Louis, C. V. Mosby, 1912, xxv + 317 pp.

6 [Dondore, Dorothy A.] Henry Howe. Dictionary of American Biography, 1932, *9*, 288-289.

7 Howe, Henry: An outline history of New Haven. New Haven, O. A. Dorman, 1884, 32 pp. (Complimentary pamphlet, Centennial of the City, July 4, 1884.)